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THE ARABIC PORTION OF THE CAIRO GENIZAH AT CAMBRIDGE.

(*Ninth Article.*)

XXIV.

A POEM ATTRIBUTED TO ALSAMAU'AL.

PAPER, one leaf 15 × 10 cm., *recto* 19 lines, *verso* 21 lines.

The fragment to be discussed in the following pages is headed *Qaṣīde by AlSamau'al*. A title like this cannot fail to excite the keenest interest of students of ancient Arabic literature, assuming that the fragment can be proved to contain an authentic poem by the Jewish poet of Teimā. However uncritical it would be to treat it as such *prima facie*, it would be equally hasty to reject it without careful examination. It will, therefore, be best to set forth at once the evidence against the authenticity, and then collect the proofs in favour of the same.

There is no trace of this poem, or parts of it, in any collection of Old Arabic poetry, or works bearing on the subject, although one genuine poem and several doubtful ones of AlSamau'al have been handed down to us¹. The fragment is written in Hebrew characters, and contains

¹ See my "Essai sur l'histoire des Juifs de Médine," *R. É. J.*, VII, p. 176 sqq.

a comparatively large element of Jewish Agādā in its lines. In its vocabulary there are six words of Jewish character, the Arabic forms of which are first known to us from the Qorān. These words are *rahīmān*¹ "merciful," *qurbān* "offering," *al fir'aun* "Pharaoh," *salwā* "quails," *mann* "manna," *muqaddas* "holy." Finally, in line 5 Abraham is alluded to as *khalīl* "friend [of God]," a term which occurs in the same connexion in Qor. IV, 124: "Allah chose Abraham as friend." Thus, although the poem may be old, a superficial examination would place it later than the Qorān, and it could therefore hardly be the work of the famous AlSamau'al b. Ādiyā.

On the other hand, it must first of all be admitted that in the heading of the poem no other person is *meant* than the poet of Teimā. No other person called AlSamau'al (with the article) is known in history, the name being an equivalent of *Samuel*. We know of two members of the Jewish tribe of the Banu Koreiẓa in Medina who bore the same name, but in the form of Shamwil² (without the article). The poem itself belongs to the category of *fakhr*³, or heroic poetry, which also includes national and family glory. The famous five lines which made the poet proverbial for fidelity in Arabic literature are of the same character, as is also a poem ascribed to him, the authenticity of which is, however, doubtful. Now there is nothing improbable in the assumption that he also composed a song in praise of his faith and ancestral history. It appears even less unlikely if one recalls the fact that at that time Judaism was decidedly popular all over Arabia, and that many Arab tribes had been converted to the same. The immediate cause of its composition may have been rivalry

¹ It is, however, doubtful whether this word was used in the original ; see the annotations to the translation.

² See *R. É. J.*, X, p. 11.

³ See ver. 10.

between his clan and some Christian Arabs in the north of the peninsula. The circumstance that the Arab littérateurs observe complete silence with regard to this poem does not speak at all against its authenticity. It stands in so sharp a contrast to the spirit of Islām that, had they known it, they would purposely have let it fall into oblivion or even destroyed it. Parallel instances of their having tampered with pre-Islamic poetry are not wanting¹.

If we now consider the obstacle caused by the five words mentioned above, we soon come to the conclusion that they prove nothing. If they occur in the Qorān, this only shows that Mohammed had learnt them from Jews to whom they were quite familiar, and it is by no means astonishing that they were introduced into a poem of thoroughly Jewish character. The same also applies to Abraham being styled the "friend of God." The Qoranic verse in question is but an adaptation of the words Isaiah xli. 8, "Abraham my friend." There was no profound knowledge of the Bible required to know of this passage, as it occurs in a popular Haftārāh, and was therefore familiar even to less learned Jews.

We possess a whole series of poems composed by Arabian Jews prior to Islām, but none of them shows any trace of Jewish character. It is not likely, however, that they should have completely abstained from writing religious poetry, because Jewish poetry was in all ages prominently religious. If none of them has come down to us, it is easily explained by the circumstance that all old Arabic poetry was handed from one generation to the other by oral tradition. The wholesale slaughter of Jews in the wars of Mohammed, and their final expulsion from the peninsula would account for the loss of this whole class of

¹ See Nöldeke, *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Poesie der alten Araber*, p. 77. The poem in question is by a Jewish author.

poetry. It is not, however, altogether improbable that a few lines, displaying the talent of one of their best poets, were saved and, at a later period, committed to writing. The corrupt form of many words, and the employment of such which do not fit into the metre, is easily explained by the circumstance that the text was written down from memory. This is a feature which the poem has in common with the bulk of old Arabic poems, the texts of which are anything but certain.

Now the metrical form of the poem, as well as occasional words mainly used in old poetry, are two more points of evidence in favour of its authenticity. Although the copyist wrote the poem as one would write a prose piece, he cannot have been quite unconscious of its poetic form, as he marked the rhyme *li* by employing ' as *mater lectionis*. Otherwise it is clear that he did not understand either the text or the metre. Proof of this is that at the end of line 17 there are two words too many. They are, however, only the remnant of a whole double line, fitting exactly, both as regards rhyme and metre.

There is still a word to be said on the elements of the Jewish Agādā dispersed through the poem. Line 5 is unfortunately not quite intelligible, but so much is clear that it contains an allusion to the Rabbinic legend of Abraham's rescue from the furnace, a legend which is reproduced in Qorān several times (XXI, 69; XXIX, 26). Line 6 not only refers to the offering up of Isaac, but also to the legend of the special creation of the ram, as recorded in Abōth, V, 6. Finally, line 19 alludes to the alleged *twelve* springs which poured forth from the rock mentioned in Qor. V, 160. (This is a combination of Exod. xv. 22 (Mechiltā) with xvii. 6.)

Now this display of Rabbinic lore, not all of which is reproduced in the Qorān, is so far removed from injuring

the authentic aspect of the poem, that it actually strengthens it. If we treat it as genuine, hypothetically, the poem represents the only Jewish document, hitherto known, which offers some little direct evidence of theological learning among the Arabian Jews in pre-Islamic times. Hitherto the only source for gaining an approximate estimation of this learning had been the Qorān, which, of course, allows but indirect inferences to be drawn. In AlSamau'al we would see a type of a Jew who was versed alike in the culture and arts of his Arab countrymen as well as in his own national literature. This double education gave his class that spiritual superiority which we find reflected in ancient Arab history as well as in the Qorān.

Finally, there is some interest attaching to the spelling of several words in the fragment. This reveals a certain looseness which agrees very well with the suggestion that the poem was penned from memory. If this was so, the writer was free to employ some vulgarisms which appear in Jewish Arabic writings even of the earliest epoch. Apart from the one in the rhyme mentioned before, there occur לִיסַת (l. 1) and אִלִּיסַנָא (lines 12 and 13), וְאַסְמַאָה (l. 7); חַטָּל for חַטָּל (l. 16), and a free interchange between אִלִּי and אִלְתִּי, Hamza is entirely neglected.

The text published below is an exact reproduction of the original, except that it is brought into the proper form of a Qāṣida. In the transcription into Arabic characters, added for the benefit of readers less skilled in reading Arabic texts written in Hebrew characters, classic spelling has been restored as far as possible. The metre is *Tawīl*.

T-S. 6 Ka. 1¹.

בשמך רחמי' הזה קצידה' ללסמול

אלא איהא אלצ'פ' אלתי עאב סאדתי ואחצי מנאקב קומה אכתארהם אכתארהם עקמא עואקד לל'י מן אלנאר ואלקרבאן ואלמחן אל'י פהדא כליל צ'ר אלנאר חולה והא'א דביח ... פדאה בכבשה ו[ה]א'א ר'ס אצטפאה וכזה פאללה שרפהם כמא לם יוליהם אלא לעק בהם אלדין הדאהם אנצת לפכר יתוך אלקלב מלהא וילהם וסואסא ויליח חירה אליסנא בנו מצר אלמנכל אלתי אליסנא בנו אלבחר אלמפרק ואל'י ואכר'נה אלבארי אלי אלשעב כי ירי וכי מא יפוזו באלגנימה' אהלהא אלסנא בנו אלקדם אל'י נצבת להם מן אלשמם ואלאמטאר כאנת ציאנה אלסנא בנו אלסלוי מע אלמן ואל'י עלי עדר אלאסבאט תגרי עיונהא וקד מכתו פי אלבר עמ' מנדרדא פלם יכל תוב מן לבאס עליהמו ואנצב נורא כאלעמוד אמאמהם אלסנא בנו אלמור אלמקדם ואל'י אלים תטאטא באלגליל תדללא ונאנא עליה עברהו וכלימה

אסמע גואבי ליסת ענך בגאפלי רחמאנהם בשואהר ודלאילי אכתזהם רבי לצפו אלחלאסלי להא אסתסלמו חב אלאלה אלכאמלי ריאחין גנאת אלנצון אלדואבלי 5 בראה בדיא לא נתאג אלתיאחלי ואסמאה אסראיל בכר אלאוילי למכבר פי אלעאגל ואלאגלי וחבאהם בפצאיל ונואילי וינשב נארא פי אלצלוע אלדואבלי 10 ויוקע פי אלאחשא מתל אלבלאב [לי] לנא צרבת מצרא בעשר מנאבלי לנא נרק אלפרעון יום אלחחאמלי אעאניבה מע גורו אלמחואצלי מן אל'הב פוק אלחמאילי 15 גמאמה' תצל להם טול אלמראחלי תגיר עסאכרהם מן אלהוף אלעאילי כשבה אלצללאילי לנא פ'ג אלצאן ערב אלמנאהלי פראתא ואללא טעמה גיר חאילי 20 יג'יהם אלבארי בכיר אלמאבלי ולם יחוגו ללנעל טרא אלנקאילי יגיר אל'נא כאלצבח גיר מואילי תדכך ללנבאר יום אלזלאזלי פשרפה אלבארי עלי כל טאילי 25

هذه قصيدة للسموئل

- الطويل
 5
 10
 15
 20
 25
- الا ايها الصفي التي عاب سادتي
 واحصى مناقب قومه اختارهم
 اختارهم عقما عواقد للذي
 من النار والقربان واليحن التي
 فهذا خليل صير النار حوله
 وهذا ذبيح (?) فدهاء بكبش
 وهذا رئيس اصطفاه وخصة
 فالله شرفهم بما لم يولهم (?)
 ألا لعق بهم الدين هداهم
 أنصت لفخر يترك القلب ملؤها
 ويلهم وسواسا ويليح حيرة
 ألسنا بنى المصر المنكل التي
 ألسنا بنى البحر المفرق والتي
 واخرجه الباري الى الشعب كي يرى
 وكى ما يفوزوا بالغنيمة اهلها
 ألسنا بنى القدس الذى نصبت لهم
 من الشمس والامطار كانت صيانه

 السن بنى السلى مع المن والذى
 على عدد الاسباط تجرى عيونها
 وقد مكثوا فى البرّ عمراً مجددا
 فلم يبيل ثوب من لباس عليهم
 وانصب نورا كالعمود امامهم
 السن بنى الطور المقدس والذى
 اليس تطأاً للليل تذللاً
 وناجا عليه عبده وكليمة
- اسمع جوابى لست عنك بغافل
 رحمانهم بشواهد ودلائل
 اختصهم ربى لصفو التسلسل
 لها استسلموا حب الاله (?) الكامل
 رياحين جنت الغصون الذوابل
 براه بديا لا نتاج الشياثل
 وسماء اسرائيل بكر الاوائل
 لمكبر (?) فى العاجل والآجل
 وحباهم بفضائل ونوائل
 وينشب نارا فى الضلوع الدواخل
 ويوقع فى الاحشاء مثل البلايل
 لنا ضربت مصر بعشر مأكلي
 لنا غرق الفروع يوم التحاملي
 اعاجيبه معجزة المتواصل
 من الذهب فوق للمائلي
 غمام تظللهم طول المراحل
 تجير عساكرهم من الهوف العائلي
 كشبه الصلائلي
 لنا فرغ الصوان عذب المناهلي
 فراتا زلالا طعمه غير حائل
 يغذيهم الباري بخير المأكلي
 ولم يحوجوا للشغل طرا النقائل
 ينير الرجا كالصبح غير مزائل
 تدخدت للغبار يوم الزلازل
 فشرقه الباري على كل طائل

TRANSLATION.

IN THY NAME OF MERCIFUL.

This is a Qaṣīda by AlSamau'al.

- 1 O whom my lords blame (?),
Hear my voice, I am not unmindful of thee.
- 2 Let me recount the high qualities of a people which
Their God has chosen with signs and miracles.
- 3 He chose them from (?) a barren woman . . .
Whom my Lord distinguished on account of their pure descent(?).
- 4 From fire and sacrifice and trials to which
They submitted from perfect love of God (?).
- 5 The one is a friend around whom the fire produced
fragrant odours which covered the flexible twigs.
- 6 The other is sacrifice which he redeemed by his lamb
which he created, but which was not the child of mountain
goats.
- 7 Then there is a prince whom he chose and distinguished,
And named him Israel the first-born.
- 8 God exalted them
. in this world and the next.
- 9 Did not religion attach to them to guide them,
And he covered (?) them with bounties and gifts.
- 10 a glory which overflows the heart (?)
And kindles an inextinguishable fire in the bosom.
- 11 And it inspires whisper and illumines . . .
And casts into his vitals something akin to disquiet (?).
- 12 Are we not the people of Egypt which was chastised; we
For whose sake Egypt was struck by ten plagues?
- 13 Are we not the people of the divided sea, we
For whose sake Pharaoh was drowned on the day of (his) arduous
enterprise ?
- 14 The Creator took the people out on the road,
That it might behold his wonders . . . (?)

- 15 And that they might carry off the booty of its people
gold over . . . of the girdles.
- 16 Are we not the people of the sanctuary . . .
To whom clouds descended which shaded them the whole
journey?
- 17 From sun and rain they were their guard
Protecting their hosts from the fierce hot wind.
- 18 Are we not the people of the quails and the manna,
And they to whom the stone poured forth the sweetness of
water ?
- 19
- 20 Its springs flowed according to the number of the tribes,
[Uniting] into a sweet, cool stream whose taste was not changed.
- 21 They tarried in the desert for renewed life [generation ?]
The Creator sustained them with the choicest of food.
- 22 The garments of their bodies did not wear out, nor
Did they require repairs (?) for their shoes.
- 23 He appointed a light, like a pillar, in front of them
Which illumined the horizon without departing.
- 24 Are we not the people of the holy mount . . .
Which crumbled to dust on the day of earthquakes ?
- 25 Did not the mighty one humble itself completely ?
But the Creator exalted it above every high position.
- 26 And his servant to whom he spoke, prayed upon it
.

ANNOTATIONS TO THE TRANSLATION.

Verse 1 (a) seems to contain a kind of *nasib*. (b) Before אָמַע an iambic word to be supplied.

2. (a) אֶחָדָהֶם קוֹמָה against the metre. The second word might perhaps be read אֶחָדָהֶם. (b) For רִחֲמָהֶם perhaps better to be read אֶחָדָהֶם.

3. (a) At the beginning perhaps וְ to be supplied. Instead of מִיָּאָדָּה one might read מִיָּאָדָּה and refer the hemistich to Gen. xi. 30. (b) An iambic word required at the beginning ; for הִלָּאִי perhaps better הִלָּאִי.

4. (b) אֶלְכָּמֶל a syllable wanting.

6. (a) After זִבְיָה a syllable wanting.

7. (a) רִים probably refers to Gen. xxxii. 29, so does also (b).

8. (a) Perhaps פשרפם אלה, but the metre is not correct in both hemistichs.

9. (a) לעק, perhaps עלק (?). (b) בפצאל a syllable too much.

10. (a) לפטר, probably לשׁר, lit. leaves the heart behind; (b) lit. fixes a fire within the innermost ribs.

11. (a) חירה ?

12. (a) See Exod. i. 12, 20.

14. (b) مع جودو is probably corruption of something like معجزة.

15. (a) Prob. בנימ׳ (without the article); (b) a whole foot wanting. See Exod. xii. 35, 36.

16. (a) prob. לא. (b) Probably to be read נמאם חטלהם.

17. (b) For עבאברהם better to be read גנורחם ; אלוף (?).

21. (a) מנרדא (?).

22. (a) See Deut. viii. 4 ; xxix. 4. (b) שרא ? ידוני ?

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